

(Washington, DC) -

Today, U.S. Rep. Debbie Halvorson voted in favor of the final version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 as the House of Representatives took action to help put Americans back to work. The recovery package, passing with a 246 to 183 vote, will save and create over three million new jobs, make us more energy independent, and will provide 95 percent of American workers with an immediate tax cut. The legislation will also lay the groundwork for long-term economic growth by investing in technology and infrastructure.

"We're facing a serious economic crisis. Our economy is bleeding jobs. Last month, America lost nearly 20,000 jobs per day. Economists on both sides of the aisle say this legislation will help our economy get back on track. No bill is perfect, but this legislation will help our country move in the right direction. I'm proud of what this legislation does to help people who have been laid off. I'm proud of what it will do to help small businesses and workers. There are unprecedented investments in education, renewable energy, technology, and infrastructure - not to mention a large middle class tax cut - something I supported throughout my campaign."

Over the last 13 months, the economy shed 3.6 million jobs. In December, the Illinois unemployment rate rose above 7.5 percent, more than the 6.7 percent national average. Unemployment even reached double digits in some areas of the 11th Congressional District.

According to White House figures, the recovery package is estimated to produce 148,000 jobs in Illinois and 8,600 jobs in the 11th Congressional District alone. Notably, the size of the tax cuts will even surpass the Bush and Reagan cuts.

"It's clear to me we needed to act right now. We must create new jobs and grow our economy. This package will do exactly that by saving and creating over three million jobs across America," Halvorson said.

Mark Zandi, Chief Economist for Moody's Economy.com and a former advisor to Senator John McCain's presidential campaign, estimated that the recovery plan will save and create up to 4 million jobs and lower the unemployment rate by 2 percent. (Zandi Analysis, 1/21/09). Senate passage of the bill is expected late Friday evening.

"Each job lost forces a family to make difficult decisions. Health insurance becomes more difficult to maintain, college costs become even more overwhelming, and mortgage payments

become impossible to meet. We inherited a very sick economy, and this isn't going to change overnight. However, I'm confident this bill is going to help many people in my district, and I'm going to continue working to create jobs and get the economy back on track," Halvorson said.

The final version of the economic stimulus bill includes:

Unprecedented Investments in Renewable Energy - Includes funds for smart energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy, such as a multi-year extension of the production tax credit for wind, hydro, geothermal, and bioenergy

Immediate tax relief for 95% of Americans

Health Care and Assistance for the Unemployed - Provides for 65% of COBRA health benefit coverage for unemployed workers for up to 9 months and additional assistance for the unemployed

Infrastructure - Over \$1.5 billion for Illinois infrastructure projects

Education - Over \$3.1 billion for Illinois schools, teachers, curriculum, and special education

College Education - \$500 increase in the maximum Pell Grant Award and a new \$2,500 tuition tax credit that will help families cope with soaring college tuition costs, and \$200 million to the college Work-Study program

Rural Broadband - \$7.2 billion nationally to expand access in rural communities, allowing rural business to compete around the globe. For every dollar invested in broadband, there is a ten-fold return on the investment to the economy

Health Information Technology - \$19 billion investment to modernize America's health care system, reduce medical errors, and lower health care costs

Unprecedented Accountability and Transparency - Once the bill becomes law, all of the spending from the recovery package can be viewed at www.recovery.gov

